Kim Knott

The Tactics of (In)Visibility among Religious Communities in Contemporary Europe

Abstract: Situated within the broader issue of why religion is now so publicly visible within secular societies in recent decades is a more specific one about the motivations and tactics of religious communities and groups in becoming more or less open to wider scrutiny. The drivers that lead them to assert their presence in the built environment and in open public spaces are intrinsic as well as extrinsic. Religious actors have a degree of agency within the process, with their own theological, social and cultural logic and reasons for adopting particular tactics, however constrained they may be by external strategies of citizenship and diversity management. Why do they invite strangers in, publicize themselves, or engage actively with others in civil society? And why do some pursue such tactics whilst others prefer to avoid the public gaze, and to operate beneath the radar? I draw on examples from recent research projects in global cities to examine these questions.

Keywords: Religious communities, visibility and invisibility, diversity, place-making, identity politics, diaspora Hinduism, Europe, London

As scholars, we are prone to give attention to some concepts, debates, places and issues more than others, and indeed to follow intellectual fads or areas of public concern. 'Visibility' and 'invisibility' are concepts with currency and relevance for the study of religion and indeed for all academic disciplines. But what becomes visible to us, as both scholars and members of society, and when and why does it do so? Why do some things disappear from view? What don't we notice, and why? In the last century, for example, both 'religion' as a social construction and the study of religion have been subject to processes of 'visibilization', of becoming more or less visible (Diez de Velasco 2010).[1]

Situated within broader debates about identity politics and why religion is now so publicly visible within secular societies is a more specific question

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about the motivations and tactics of religious communities in becoming more or less open to wider scrutiny. What are the drivers that lead religious communities and groups to assert their presence in the built environment and in open public spaces? Why do they invite strangers in, publicize themselves, or engage actively with others in civil society? Are such tactics (Certeau 1984; Woodhead 2013) merely the consequence of effective state strategies of citizenship and diversity management or is there more to it for the religious communities and groups involved? And why do some pursue such tactics whilst others prefer to avoid the public gaze, and to operate beneath the radar? The answers to these questions are necessarily contextual – historically, geographically and politically. Different spatial regimes 'give rise to and regulate distinctions between the religious and the secular, the public and the private, the visible and the invisible, and the native and the stranger' (Vásquez, Knott 2014, 327). But religious communities and groups also have a degree of agency within the process, with their own theological, socio-political and cultural logics and reasons for adopting certain tactics, however constrained.

It is this agency and the tactics devised in association with it, rather than state and other public strategies to which religious communities are subject, which will be the principal focus of this chapter. Following a brief consideration of the late-modern 'new visibility' of religion, and a theoretical discussion of the dynamics, power and drivers of (in)visibility, I will draw on examples from diaspora Hinduism to explore some of the tactics of visibilization. In a final section, I will turn to recent research in the London borough of Southwark to consider the rationale and choices made by religious communities to draw attention to themselves or to retreat from public examination.[2]

1 The new visibility: religion, culture, community

In 2008 Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward (2008, 1) argued for a new visibility of religion rather than its re-emergence. At odds with a range of theorists who had over the years posited a 'return of the sacred', 're-enchantment' or 're-emergence' of religion from the private to the public sphere, they referred to 'a new aware-

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2 This research was conducted in association with the project, 'Iconic Religion: How Imaginaries of Religious Encounter Structure Urban Space', funded by HERA (12-HERA-JRP-CE-FP-224) from 2013 to 2016. Researchers: Volkhard Krech and Susanne Lanwerd, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany, Birgit Meyer and Daan Beekers, University of Utrecht, the Netherlands, and Kim Knott and Steph Berns at Lancaster University, UK. For an introduction to some of the key concepts and issues, see Knott, Krech, Meyer 2016.

ness', whilst recognizing that what is now named or seen as 'religion' may indeed have changed. They accepted that '[w]ith the new visibility of religion thesis, we will always be confronted with what actually counts as religion and who is doing the counting' (Hoelzl, Ward 2008, 3). In their edited book, Hoelzl and Ward turned away from institutional religion and a sociological approach toward an examination of cultural hermeneutics. However, in this chapter, the focus remains on 'religious communities', which continue to offer complex challenges for analyzing this 'new visibility'.

Before I discuss these in more detail, it is important to note three arenas in which religion more broadly has been prone to either erasure or enhanced attention as a result of the underpinning theoretical assumptions and practices of late-modernity. They are simultaneously part of the same problem of (in)visibility faced by contemporary religious communities in Europe, and also part of its explanation. The first arena is the academic sector where, until the turn of the twenty-first century, in modernizing disciplines – such as sociology, psychology, anthropology and politics – secularizing discourses worked to limit, and in some cases eclipse, religion and its study. The theoretical framework of secularization dominated, premised in various iterations on the privatization and/or decline of religion and the loss of its social significance (Dobbelaere 2004). The critique of Theology, with its insider stance and confessional approach, and the rise of a new discipline, variously referred to as Religionswissenschaft, the Science of Religion, Religious Studies or Comparative Religion, were an early part of this process, and the dispute with Theology has continued both within and at the boundary of the new discipline to this day (Cotter, Robertson 2016; Fitzgerald 2000; McCutcheon 2003).

The second arena in which religion was occluded – before its renewed visibility – was in European state structures and discourses where ideological and political secularism to a greater or lesser extent held sway, often in a formal relationship with the state Church. Religion and religious communities have been understood and governed within such a secularist milieu in which religion – notably Christianity – was broadly confined to private rather than public life and the affairs of state, with religion at times marginalized and managed, but not fully erased (Berger, Davie, Fokas 2008). Since the 1980s, however, immigration and population change have increasingly impacted on national and European law and policy-making, on equality, diversity and human rights, bringing questions about religion, religious identities and communities back onto the agenda.

Arising from this, the third arena is that of state strategies of diversity (variously assimilation, multiculturalism, pillarization, integration and so on) and their associated discourses and practices. Following race and ethnicity, religion

has become the subject of such strategies, with religious communities, their places, resources and representatives accommodated, distinguished and appropriated, for example, as social welfare providers, repositories of cultural heritage, or as a route to electoral constituencies (Baumann 1999; Triandafyllidou et al. 2012).

In the twentieth century, within academic disciplines and universities, and within local and national structures and discourses, religions and their communities were subject to forces that made them more or less visible. And this has undoubtedly affected what we as scholars have studied and how our work has been viewed within the academy and wider society. Nevertheless, following Hoelzl and Ward, it is clear that religious communities, like religion and indeed non-religion (which I shall not address here for reasons of space), have become increasingly visible in the European public sphere in the twenty-first century, not least of all as a result of changes wrought by global migration. Something empirical, on the ground, has changed, in addition to its mediation in discourse, the built environment, and public policy. Social change, political strategizing, media representation, and material and spatial processes have all contributed to this new visibility.

As Gerd Baumann (1996, 1999) argued, the visibility of religious communities has been more a matter of public discourse – both dominant and demotic – than social change. Social groups – 'communities' as they were known in British common parlance in the 1990s – could not be constructed, imagined or represented (by policy makers, academics, practitioners or by community representatives themselves) without reference to 'culture' (Baumann 1996). The very concept of 'community' simultaneously enclosed and carried other concepts with it – of 'culture', but also of 'identity' and 'politics'. The repeated reference to the term 'community' – Britain as 'a community of communities', for example – brought with it the enhanced visibility of culture, especially religion (as in the 'Sikh community', 'Muslim community' and so on) (Knott 2004).

Those of us who researched such communities of culture in this period necessarily contributed to the increased visibilization of religion.[3] In part as a reaction to this by-product of academic focus, scholars of religion, like those in cognate disciplines, turned from analysis of community and communities to other approaches, notably to a focus on diversity, governmentality, and to the study of discourses rather than groups and identities.

The scholarly move from 'community' to 'diversity' has in part been a reaction to the difficulty of writing about groups without reifying issues of identity

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3 See the critique in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Bhatt, Mukta 2000.

and culture. The concept of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2007, 2015), not without conceptual problems of its own, was developed in order to highlight the complexity of identifications, in part breaking down the notion of groups defined by a single identifier, but also challenging conceptions of social and cultural homogeneity within groups. Wessendorf (2014, 10), who has explored the idea of 'commonplace diversity', asks the question, 'How to write about "groups"?' She notes that we 'risk taking cultural differences as a given and overlooking the fluidity of cultural boundaries' (Wessendorf 2014, 10). Like others who favor the focus on diversity, she chooses to follow everyday interactions that may unmake communities and cultures, in her case by focusing on commonplace diversity and people's self-descriptions. Even Wessendorf, however, finds it impossible to resist the term 'ethnic background' to signal a 'shared past'.

There are several other ways in which the reification of communities of culture has been resisted. One has been to focus not on religions and religious communities *per se* but on how they are governed and managed. Here, attention turns to those external forces, policies and agents who construct, represent and discipline them, such as government, the law, education, public bodies, and media (Stack et al. 2015). In this approach, 'they' are produced, represented and made visible as 'religious communities' by such forces, policies and agents. A key problem here – I seek to address it later – is that of agency: 'they' are treated as entities to be worked on by others rather than as agents in their own right (cf. Van der Veer 2015). A third approach has been to focus on discourses rather than groups or institutions (Baumann 1996; Stringer 2013). In this approach, discourses of culture and community, both dominant and demotic, as Gerd Baumann suggested, are seen to emerge from and be drawn on by both religious and nonreligious people *and* state and other public actors. It is in such discourses that communities of culture, including 'religious communities' get defined, reified and made visible from both outside and inside.

Taken together these approaches have contributed significantly to a better understanding of the processes by which 'religious communities' have been forged and made visible, and resisted and critiqued as problematic social and cultural constructions. In the remainder of this paper, however, I acknowledge these constraints, but nevertheless work with the notion of 'religious communities' as self-identified communities of culture who organize as social groups with common interests and who participate in acts of religious identity-construction and place-making. I do so in part to right the balance of the alternative approaches mentioned above (focused on diversity, governmentality and discourse), by looking more closely at the agency of minority religious actors in response to the strategies of major state institutions, public bodies and the media.

Here I draw on the differentiation of strategies and tactics (Certeau 1984; Woodhead 2013) in distinguishing those modes of power used by strategists, who have 'available time to plan, design, order, impose and reinforce' (Woodhead 2013, 15), and by contrast those drawn on by 'the weak [who] are forced to occupy the space which the powerful control, and to respond with lightening reflex ... They have to make history in spaces and conditions which are not of their own making, with tools and materials which are owned by others' (Woodhead 2013, 15). Of necessity, the latter must give way to those with power, but need not evacuate those places controlled by them. They may find ways 'to enter them, to appropriate aspects of them, to turn them to new uses and to gain some control over them' (Woodhead 2013, 16). Employing the tactics of visibility is a key method of obtaining a measure of agency in an alien milieu, and – in a limited way – of rebalancing power from the bottom up. But it is not without its costs. As Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri (2014, 646) have suggested, '[t]he request for visibility implies a demand for social recognition which entails becoming full actors who can display their own identity and specificity in public space'. Bearing this in mind, it is important to consider the tactics of invisibility, and of temporary as well as permanent incursions into public space.

The strategies imposed by others on minority religious communities and the tactics deployed by them operate in several modes: discursive, spatial/material, temporal and social. In discursive mode, people and things become (in)visible through government policy, political rhetoric, media representations, and in the discourses of religious and other community leaders. They are also performed publicly, in political meetings, religious processions and local events. Tactics and strategies also operate through the built and natural environments, signage, mobile bodies, icons, artefacts and commodities – in spatial/material mode. Here, as in discourse, tactics may compete with strategies of erasure, closure and demolition; they may also be employed by actors to conceal themselves or their activities. In temporal mode, strategies and tactics of visibility may be used to mark time in conjunction with calendars and life cycles. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for religion and religious communities to be made invisible in historical accounts or heritage re-enactments for strategic reasons. Finally, there are multiple social practices whereby religious people and groups are included or excluded, stigmatized or reified, invited to participate, enter or share, and engaged or disengaged in various ways. These may be top-down, with religious communities made invisible by exclusionary practices, for example, or bottom up, with religious actors themselves behaving as gate-keepers, hosts or agents of social change.

2 Theorizing the (in)visibility of religious communities

Why use the concept of (in)visibility to signal the presence or absence of religious communities in public life, and the powers that bring this about?

(In)visibility has become a dominant trope in late modernity because it is the visual order that assaults us, and visual representations that are circulated and discussed globally. Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* (1974) referred to three 'formants' of the abstract space of modernity, the principal one being the visual. In that formant, in which the façade or visual surface was taken to be 'the truth of space' (Dimendberg 1998, 25), the image stands in for reality, the part for the whole. Furthermore, the 'visible' and 'visibility' have become metaphors for what can be apprehended, perceived; and of all that is present to the senses. Not that the other senses are irrelevant for the presence of religion in public life: audibility and the regulation of soundscapes, for example, have been important in European debates about minarets, and in permission to congregate and hold festivals in public. But, as Donna Haraway (1997) among others asserts, it is the visual that dominates. She takes this further, however, by asking, 'In a world replete with images and representations, whom can we not see or grasp, and what are the consequences of such selective blindness ... How is visibility possible? For whom, by whom, and of whom?' (Haraway 1997, 202). Her words get to the heart of the politics of (in)visibility. They open up the concept beyond the binary of the visible/invisible.

Drawing on two further concepts – of presence and attention – it is possible to identify four states: the visible [A], non-visible [B], (in)visible [C] and invisible [D].

	Attention drawn	Attention not drawn
Present (available to the senses)	A: Visible	B: Non-visible
Absent (not available to the senses)	C: (In)visible	D: Invisible

Fig. 1: (In)visibility: Four States

In cell A, we find that which is perceivable, available to the senses, and to which attention has been drawn in some way or another, whether in discourse or practice, and whether strategically by government or the law, or tactically by local actors. David Garbin (2012) alerts us to the case of Fanfare Kimbanguiste, a young Congolese diasporan marching band whose disciplined musical performance in London's Lord Mayor's Parade challenged assumptions about the culture and etiquette of young British black people (commonly associated with gangs,

hip hop and criminality). They drew attention to themselves through the public nature of their performance, their self-confident black Congolese Kimbanguist identity, and their counter-tactics of visibility.

Cell B includes that which is available to be seen but to which attention has not been drawn, the non-visible. Formally present, but rarely attended to by passers-by, are the multi-faith rooms that are now commonplace in many ostensibly secular institutions and public places, from hospitals and universities, to shopping malls, airports and even football grounds (Crompton 2013). As Crompton notes, they are often mundane rather than sacred spaces, there but somehow not there, often empty, devoid of elaboration and constructed of banal materials. For users of such spaces (for prayer or quiet meditation), their presence is of functional importance; yet they are barely noticed by non-users.

Some people, things, places and events are absent, but attention is nevertheless drawn to them: cell C, the (in)visible. They are not invisible because, as passers-by, we are repeatedly reminded of their absence. Crossbones graveyard, in the London Borough of Southwark (to which I will return later in the paper) is a case in point (Berns 2016a; Knott 2015). Although there was once a visible paupers' graveyard on Redcross Way in Southwark, since the mid-nineteenth century it has been closed to burials. For most of the twentieth century it has indeed been invisible: just waste ground owned by the company, London Transport, with no overt signs or features to declare its past purpose. During an archaeological excavation triggered by the company's desire to develop the land, bodies were exhumed and the history of the site made known. Although the graveyard was on private land, a small group of local people memorialized it through story and ritual, repeatedly drawing attention to its history, purpose and symbolic meaning by tying tokens to the external gate. A memorial plaque was established, vigils held, and a website set up (Crossbones 2016). The 'outcast dead' were remembered though there was very little evidence above ground of their presence.

If the graveyard on Redcross Way is an example of an (in)visible site, nearby Southwark Towers exemplifies invisibility. Built in 1975, when it was pulled down in 2008 Southwark Towers had the status of being the tallest London building ever to be demolished. In the foothills of the highly visible and now infamous Shard (the Shard.com 2016), it is now gone and forgotten, leaving no trace and barely a memory.

Together with the four modes I mentioned earlier, these states – the visible, non-visible, (in)visible and invisible – in which people, places and things are present or absent, revealed or obscured – help to open up the process of strategic or tactical (in)visibilization in which religious communities play a part as the

objects of policy, discourse or official practice or as agents in place-making, identity politics and local and national debate and activism.

However, as Bal and Hernandez-Navarro (2011) note, in *Art and Visibility in Migratory Cultures*, it is also important to consider the dynamics of these states: things or groups *become* visible or invisible. (In)visibility is not a static condition. What are the processes by which this happens? When and why is the non-visible (that which is self-evident) disrupted or called to attention? What are the conditions by which things become visible: Is it important that space is made for disagreement or contestation, for example? Bal, Hernandez-Navarro and colleagues discuss the role of art in opening up the possibility of increasing the visibility of migrants, suggesting that assemblages of artworks themselves constitute provisional 'communities' which may allow migrants, legal or illegal, to acquire a status and stake a claim as full participants. But the move from non-visibility or (in)visibility to visibility may come at the price of increased suspicion or even hyper-visibility.

In *Missing Bodies*, Casper and Moore (2009) ask: 'What can account for the fact that certain bodies are hyper-exposed, brightly visible, and magnified whilst others are hidden, missing, and vanished?' European Muslims, for example, are identified, indeed defined by key visible markers. Nadia Jeldtoft (2013), writing on the 'hypervisibility of Islam', cites dress, religious practice, ethnicity and piety – but notes also how young Muslims themselves as well as external agencies such as the media have a hand in this process. Getting noticed by peers, but also by outsiders, is a sign that one has successfully produced a space, made a public statement, staked a claim, begun a process of self-authorization which may lead to one gaining legitimacy. Of course, it may also lead to increased surveillance, hardening of boundaries and conflict. This is just what happened in the case of 'the inclusive mosque initiative' at St John's Waterloo, an Anglican church in London's Southwark, in March 2015 when Canon Goddard allowed a Muslim woman, Dr Amina Wadud, to lead Islamic prayers in his Church (for which he was later made to apologize publicly) (Pocklington 2015). The hypervisibility of Islam – further enhanced with reference to Muslim women – drew attention to an otherwise non-visible church. An 'other space' (Foucault 1968; Soja 1996), however temporary, was produced, a claim was staked, but the cost was increased surveillance, and the policing of boundaries.

Some bodies and communities are hypervisible, but other are just 'missing'. In 1993, Judith Butler asked why some bodies matter whilst others do not. Matter, wrote Butler (1993, 3) is 'a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface'. Missing bodies, by extrapolation, must be those that, for whatever reason, have yet to produce or generate such an effect, either because they have not sought or been afforded such mate-

rial stabilization or because they have been prohibited from achieving it. They remain hidden, missing or vanished.

Materialization and indeed representation, giving shape and substance to entities, are socio-cultural processes which build on the embodied cognitive propensity of humans to order and distinguish things on the basis of pre-conceptual structures. In their discussion of these structures or 'image schemas', the cognitive philosophers Lakoff (1987) and Johnson (1987) gave particular attention to what they called the 'CONTAINER image schema'. The representational characteristics of (in)visibility – both linguistic and imagistic – are associated with the pre-conceptual structure CONTAINER and its entailments (containment). Things that are visible are distinguished from others that are not visible, with the latter being covered or masked from view. It is not that they are not present, just that they are not visible. As Butler (1993, 3) notes of materialization, an effect is brought about of 'boundary, fixity and surface': all conceptions associated with containment. Prepositions associated with (in)visibility include *out, on, before, open, closed, inside, within, behind, under,* as in phrases such as '*on* show', 'coming *out*', 'standing *out*', '*before* our very eyes', 'staring us in the face', '*on* the agenda', but also 'hard to reach', '*behind* closed doors', '*under* the radar'. Often using metaphors of theatre and performance, but also security and surveillance, in the language of (in)visibility reference is made to things being highlighted, in the limelight, in the public gaze, but also camouflaged, masked or disguised, hidden, disclosed or uncovered.

Mark Johnson, in *The Body in the Mind* (1987), lists the entailments of containment, and the experience we get when something becomes bounded and stabilized, and its location becomes fixed in relation to that which surrounds it or abuts it. The entailments are related, with the fourth being especially significant for analyzing the process of (in)visibilization:

– The experience of containment typically involves protection from, or resistance to, external forces.
– Containment also limits and restricts forces within the container.
– Because of this restraint of forces, the contained object gets a relative fixity of location.
– This relative fixing of location within the container means that the contained object becomes either accessible or inaccessible to the view of an observer. It is either held so that it can be observed, or the container itself blocks or hides the object from view.
– Finally we experience transitivity of containment. If B is *in* A, then whatever is *in* B is also *in* A. (Johnson 1987, 22–23)

Religions and religious communities, like other cultural closures and social collectivities, are commonly described and understood in terms of containment: referred to as having boundaries which are more or less closed, and which may obscure those people, things, practices, beliefs and so on within the container from those outside it.

(In)visibility is an entailment of the (pre)conceptual process by which people routinely imagine, represent and differentiate religions and religious communities, as well as other groups, things and places. However, an important second step, with reference to any specific case, is then to establish the conditions or forces that lead to those things in question being open to observation or blocked from view. Context notwithstanding, a range of external (or extrinsic) drivers that govern the (in)visibility of religious communities in public space need to be borne in mind. These are discussed by Vásquez and Knott (2014) in their elaboration of religious place-making in different 'spatial regimes' in London, Johannesburg and Kuala Lumpur, and include the following: consideration of the historical period in question, the type of nation state and postcolonial regime, but also any local particularities; majority/minority relations and privileges, including those pertaining to the national church or other majority religion; the political and legal arrangements regarding religion and its public presence; patterns of migration, stages and places of settlement, and relations between communities; and the attendant opportunities that arise for religious place-making and public expression.

These extrinsic drivers are themselves interwoven and complex, not least in terms of gender, race and class, and they generate ambiguity and anxiety. In Europe, there is a tension on the one hand between the desire for minority religious communities to participate actively, to be out there in public and on display, for them to provide services to fill welfare gaps, and to be integrated into the wider social whole (visible and useful, but nevertheless commodified), and, on the other, for them to be undemanding, unproblematic and unthreatening (invisible but nevertheless contained and secured). Being quiet, moderate, liberal, and adjusting appropriately to current political agendas, e.g. on equality and diversity, are requirements; religious communities that insist on singing to the tune of other authorities, divine or human, are more of a problem in a secular polity.

But what is also clear is that religious communities contest the right to representation within the public spaces they inhabit, and this includes the right to be more or less visible.

3 Diaspora Hinduism and the tactics of (in)visibility

I turn to the case of diaspora Hinduism in Europe and the US to illustrate this claim. Research since the 1970s has revealed several key processes in which Hindus in various local and national settings and at different stages of their settlement have sought, at times, to minimize their visibility (to be less different) (Knott 2009). They have done so (i) by stressing areas of common interest with other religious groups, (ii) by de-emphasizing vernacular aspects and representing a standardized form of Hindu belief and practice, (iii) by claiming the moral high ground (shared with liberalism) of 'tolerance', (iv) by engaging in an 'ecumenical strategy of adaptation' (Williams 1996, 166), and (v) by participating with others in local interfaith initiatives.

At other times and places, tactics of visibility have been deployed. Prema Kurien (2012, 100), with several highly public disputes in American Hinduism in mind, noted that latterly Hindu lay leaders have 'spoken up against what they felt were fundamental misrepresentations of Hinduism within American society: Hindu conceptions of the divine, the nature of the caste system and the position of women in Hindu society'. They have contested what they saw as unfair or misplaced visibility. Furthermore, in a heated culture war between scholars 'historicizing Hinduism' and American Hindus 'defending Dharma' (Sippy 2012, 15), 'diaspora community organizations have asserted a right to protect what they perceived as their authentic tradition in public contexts'. Enhanced visibility through public contestation over how Hinduism should be interpreted can be added to other examples in which Hindus have challenged their marginalization vis-à-vis the hyper-representation of Muslims and Islam (Knott 2009; Zavos et al. 2012). More commonly, Hindus have simply asserted their presence in the urban environment by building traditional style temples, adding elaborate facades to existing buildings (Reddy, Zavos 2010), and by taking their rituals out onto the streets (Jacobsen 2008). In these examples, visibilization has operated in different modes according to time and place, but favoring discursive and spatial/material modes.

Whilst such interventions have undoubtedly been invoked in part in reaction to those extrinsic local, national and global conditions, forces and strategies listed earlier, they provide evidence of the range of efforts made by Hindus to draw attention toward or away from themselves in relation to their surroundings, to make themselves more or less visible. The tactics they chose no doubt depended on their confidence to speak or stand out (in turn related to such things as length of settlement, status, rights, community size and so on), on what motivated them

(theological or political drivers), and on what they believed they had to lose or gain. As Vertovec argued when writing about the Hindu diaspora (2000, 106), Hindus, like other religious and ethnic communities, participate in 'vis-à-vis' identity politics in which it is not just their own situation and visibility they must bear in mind, but how they are faring in relation to others (for example, in respect of public funding, public representation, media portrayals, policy initiatives, schools and educational provision, and so on).

And all the time this is going on at the level of leadership and public life, other tactics are being deployed *within* communities in which classes or interest groups advance or retreat from view as they either struggle for power or seek to draw attention away from themselves. In all these instances, public or otherwise, communities and their members – in this case Hindus – face the consequences of being represented and representing themselves as a 'Hindu community' (Knott 2009). In so doing they may to some degree be protected from external forces, but they may also be limited or constrained in how they may act within their own 'community'.

4 Religious tactics and (in)visibility in the London borough of Southwark

Internal theological as well as socio-political factors impact on the tactics deployed by religious groups. By 'theological' I refer to the group's internal vision of 'the good', of how members believe it should be lived, and what they do to flourish, as a community and as persons. Factors, such as how the group understands human/divine relationships, its moral code and teachings, and how it sees its place in the world and beyond, are embodied and represented in differing ways by individual members, but are also packaged by the group for external use and drawn on in negotiations for public visibility with outsiders, including authorities and neighbors. Too often this perspective and motivation for action is lost in a welter of socio-political explanations for public visibility. But living within European societies that are normatively secular (including those with a state church), religious groups routinely produce 'other spaces' (Foucault 1986; Soja 1996), alternative theological representations of their own community, of others and the world around them which they display in diverse ways. They imagine and construct cosmic and utopian places (Tweed 2006). They are also habitually motivated to sacralize, through ritual, to make new places and adapt existing ones (Knott 2016).

Some groups are motivated to erect sacred boundaries, to separate themselves off from the external world, to fix their location, and obscure their internal affairs from the gaze of outsiders (cf. Johnson 1987). Others, however, routinely open themselves up to outsiders, inviting others in but also getting out and about. They proceed to sacralize public space, to spread the word and deed to others. They seek through mission to exceed the bounds of their containment. More than three decades ago, Roy Wallis (1984) provided scholars with a useful typology for addressing this difference. He distinguished between new religious movements on the basis of their orientation to the world around them, identifying those that were world rejecting, world affirming, or simply world accommodating. Other historians, geographers and sociologists of religion, in modelling how religious groups respond to outsiders, have contributed to the construction of religions by distinguishing them as more open or closed, or as more 'world' than 'ethnic' (e.g. Cotter, Robertson 2016; Fitzgerald 2000; Stump 2008).

In order to investigate further why and how religious communities pursue various tactics of (in)visibility, I turn finally to the London borough of Southwark, the locality at the center of research conducted by the London team as part of the 'Iconic Religion' project (Iconic Religion 2016). The purpose here is not to discuss the tactics of any particular religious community in depth, but to illustrate the idea that group tactics are devised and enacted in a local field of interconnections (simultaneously religious, spatial, material, social, political and economic). In this short analysis, I will refer back to the modes and states of (in)visibility set out earlier.

In the hinterland of London's dominant secular 'icon', the Shard, is Southwark Cathedral (for images, see Iconic Religion 2016; Lanwerd 2016). In the twelfth century, the church of an Augustinian priory occupied the site, which later became the Anglican parish church of St Saviour's, and – from 1905 – the Cathedral and mother church of the Diocese of Southwark (Southwark Cathedral 2016). At street level, the Cathedral is hard to discern, drowned out in a local built environment which includes not only the Shard but London Bridge Station, an over-powering railway viaduct and Borough Market (Knott 2015). Present but often unnoticed, like many other churches in the contemporary European urban landscape, to most passers-by it is 'non-visible' (available to the senses but with no attention drawn to it). But get closer and it becomes clear that Cathedral clergy and staff have sought to counteract this everyday erasure. Its courtyard and graveyard offer a place to sit, away from the bustle of local streets and are used by visitors who consume food bought in the Cathedral café or nearby market; the Cathedral's doors are always open, with tourists encouraged to enter and enjoy the peace, but also the heritage of one of London's oldest surviving Christian places. But, despite the fact that it is dwarfed by the Shard and masked by

other local structures, within the religious field of Southwark the Cathedral nevertheless remains a seat of power. As mother church of the Diocese, it has Christian status and legitimacy, and the right to make and remake the parish and beyond. Furthermore, it draws on this power to contain, connect, mobilize and at times authorize other religious and spiritual bodies within its boundary (Knott 2015). Exploiting temporal, spatial and social modes of visibility, its festivals and processions – including the annual civic service in which Cathedral clergy bless the market and its food, beating the bounds on Ascension Day, the ecumenical walk of witness at Easter, and various interfaith initiatives – are all means by which the Cathedral extends its local reach, links with others, and visibly displays its symbolic and ritual power and religious status (Berns 2016b).[4]

South of the Cathedral, in an area associated in the public imagination with the life and work of the author, Charles Dickens, is the Baitul Aziz Islamic Cultural Centre. Purpose built, distinctive and stylistically set apart from the dismal vernacular housing blocks around it, the mosque is at an angle to the road to allow praying Muslims to face Mecca (Baitul Aziz 2016). It has been designed to be clearly visible (in spatial/material mode) and to represent a community which has established itself and grown out of an earlier accommodation not fit for purpose (in the basement of a shop). Yet, its outward visibility belies the reality of a community that goes about its regular business without generally engaging with others (Knott 2015). Public attention is generally not sought. Enclosed by railings, the mosque is hard to enter without invitation (other mosques in the area – in recycled buildings – have entrances which open onto the street). In architectural terms, it is visible, but not easily accessible.

However, in 2013, sometime after local Muslims had obtained permission to further extend their site to build more facilities, an archaeological investigation was scheduled.[5] Seeing this as a unique opportunity for minority community engagement, Pre-Construct Archaeology (the company hired for the excavation work) formed a partnership with the mosque which led to local Muslim volunteers being trained to assist in digging the site. Roman burials, wells, ceramics and animal skeletons were all found during the excavation. According to a local community website (London SE1 2013), '[t]he mosque hope[d] to use the archaeological dig to forge new links with its neighbours and demonstrate that it is a centre of learning and welcome'. After the digging was completed,

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4 'Beating the Bounds' is a custom dating back to the Anglo-Saxon period in England in which clergy and parishioners walk the boundaries of the parish to mark and show the extent of parish jurisdiction.

5 In the city of London an archaeology excavation is required by law in association with a successful application for building planning and development.

an Open Day was held in January 2014, with local people (Muslims and non-Muslims) able to view the finds and hear more about the mosque and the Islamic community. With a second Open Day in May, the community of Baitul Aziz demonstrated a desire to become more visible and open to people in the local neighborhood, by making accessible what is normally hidden from view.

Not far from the Cathedral and mosque, and overlooked by the local Roman Catholic Church of the Most Precious Blood, is Crossbones graveyard. As I indicated earlier, the graveyard itself was invisible for much of the twentieth century: absent from view in waste land belonging to London Transport, with no evidence remaining above ground of having been a paupers' graveyard from the medieval period to the late nineteenth century. The land lay vacant for nearly a century. Then, in the 1990s, London Transport planned to build an electricity sub-station for the London underground Jubilee Line extension. Prior to the work, Museum of London archaeologists conducted a partial excavation (see footnote 5), removing some 150 skeletons, the majority belonging to women, children and the unborn. By the archaeologists' own estimate, these represented, 'less than 1% of the total number of burials that were made at this site', with many of the dead thought to have been prostitutes (Crossbones 2016; Berns 2016a). Since then local people, including playwright and ritual practitioner John Constable, also known as John Crow, have sacralized the site, drawing on a variety of spiritual traditions, with London Transport's own gate the focal point for regular vigils and offerings for the 'outcast dead' (Hausner 2016). A loose community has developed over the years, with many visitors attending the site, some adding to its public visibility with mementos of their own and others just marking its importance by their presence (Iconic Religion 2016; Crossbones 2016). Crossbones has visibly materialized, from waste land on what was once a graveyard, into a public garden, with its boundary and surface area now fixed, negotiated and worked by local people (Berns 2016a).

Furthermore, Crossbones has now been recognized and authorized as a stopping point on the Christian processions that take place in the parish (Berns 2016b): in 2015, Crossbones' 'outcast dead' were blessed, and its unconsecrated ground dedicated by the Dean of Southwark. It is the Anglican Cathedral and its clergy who organize these regular ecumenical events, but everyone – irrespective of denomination – participates in carrying the Cross at Easter or palm crosses on Palm Sunday, reading and reciting prayers, beating the bounds of the parish, making Christianity visible to a wider public, reinforcing ecumenical bonds, and mapping Christian Southwark in the process. Christian conceptions of the importance for all disciples of remembering Christ's suffering on the Cross, of Christian witness and of ecumenical partnership are important intrinsic drivers of visibility for this local community.

The struggle involved in striving for visibility was illustrated in the words of one Christian woman at the time of another public ritual, the blessing of the river Thames, when members of the Cathedral and the Church of St Magnus the Martyr on the north side of the river meet in the middle of London Bridge:

> It's brilliant that in a city like this, and in such a secular age that we live [in], we meet on the bridge and we are all very visible. All the clergy there with their robes flowing, full regalia, the Bishop comes, everything. It's a real chance to be seen and [to be] visible as Christians. That's not so easy these days, to be visible as Christians in London. And it's not so easy to stand up and say, 'Actually, I am a Christian'... So I really enjoy it for that, because you are able to give witness to what you believe in and to what you say you believe in and other people can see it.[6] (Steward, Southwark Cathedral)

Her words reflect not only the theological reasoning behind the need for public visibility, but the extrinsic forces that must be engaged and overcome, in this case arising from the normative secular context in which Christians in the UK – even more than other religious communities – have felt erased and marginalized.

5 Conclusion

Although I have drawn attention to some of the intrinsic drivers and tactics by which religious communities have sought to overcome such constraints, to find measured ways of making themselves more visible and to open themselves up to outsiders, all such initiatives in the end result from the engagement of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Moreover, what a focus on religious communities, as actors who pursue tactics of (in)visibility on the basis of their theological, social and political interests, has left largely unexplored is the way in which the modes of visibility they employ – whether discursive, spatial/material, temporal or social – may themselves contribute to the closure or disclosure, invisibility or visibility, and the silencing or erasure of other voices or interests (cf. Beekers, Tamimi Arab 2016). This must be the focus of another paper.

Also neglected are the effects of (in)visibility. What is communicated to observers when something is made visible? Is it what the actors intended to communicate? What effect does visibility have on outsiders and onlookers? Does it draw them closer, make them less ignorant or unaware? Who is benefitted by

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6 Interview conducted in January 2015 by Steph Berns in conjunction with the 'Iconic Religion' project.

such a process? Are agents of the state, local authorities and policymakers better served if religious communities become more visible and accessible? And what is going on when a religious group recedes from view? Is it just in decline, or does its increasing invisibility denote a problem? Does it become more dangerous, a potential threat, or is it just a question of 'out of sight, out of mind'?

In general, however, religious communities do not simply disappear or die out when they are excluded or denied public space or attention. Yes, they turn inward and attend to their own internal business, but some at least look for the right time and place to open their doors and reassert their interests. And there is a lesson here for all strategists who deny or seek to erase others. Outcasts may go underground, even quite literally. But they may well discover renewed vigor to practice and share their beliefs in private or under the duress of prohibition, until it again becomes safe to emerge and deploy the tactics of visibility.

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Kim Knott
Politics, Philosophy and Religion
Lancaster University
Lancaster LA1 4YG
UK
k.knott@lancaster.ac.uk